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## Naval Facilities Engineering Command

# Abstract of an Accident

96-2

**ACCIDENT TYPE:** FALL FROM FORKLIFT  
**INJURY:** MULTIPLE FRACTURES (SHOULDER, RIB, LEG, TOOTH)  
MULTIPLE LACERATIONS (HEAD, FACE)  
TORN KNEE TENDON  
**TYPE OF WORK:** BUILDING RENOVATION; MEASURING A WINDOW

**DESCRIPTION OF THE ACCIDENT:** A mason was seriously injured when he fell approximately 20 feet from a make-shift work platform elevated on the forks of a rough terrain forklift. The injury occurred on a building renovation site. The employee was tasked to measure the exterior dimensions of a second floor window. He went to the site, but did not take a ladder or find a personnel lift there. He asked the operator of a passing rough terrain fork lift to raise him up to the window in the materials handling box the fork lift was carrying. The operator agreed. The employee climbed onto the shop-built box (constructed of plywood and two by fours: bottom dimensions 4 feet by 8 feet with enclosed back and sides 4 feet high - weight app. 60 lbs) and the operator raised him approximately 20 feet to the window. The box was not level because the forklift was positioned on uneven ground, so the operator moved the forks laterally in an attempt to level it. When the operator stopped moving the forks, the box tipped to one side and the employee fell, followed immediately by the box. The employee landed on a pile of scrap metal, the box struck the ground next to him then rolled on top of him.

**DIRECT CAUSE:** Failure to recognize hazardous condition - Substituted material handling equipment and procedures (rough terrain fork lift and trash bucket) where operation required personnel handling equipment and procedures (manlift, scissors lift).

### **CONTRIBUTING CAUSES:**

- **Haste** - Employee wanted to save time and effort required to move and set up a personnel lift.
- **Omitted requirements** - The make-shift platform's construction and the content of the operator training did not meet ANSI B56.6 requirements for elevating personnel by rough terrain fork lift.
- **Human error** - Operator did not read and heed equipment manufacturer's restriction "***Do Not Use This Machine For Lifting Personnel***" posted on the fork lift.

### **LESSONS LEARNED:**

- Use **only** equipment and procedures designed and approved for the task (in this case elevating personnel).
- Either ensure **all** equipment operator training includes **specific** restrictions against elevating personnel **or** provide the appropriate requirements **and** ensure they are fully implemented.  
**Never** assume the fastest way to do a job is the safest way to do a job. In the time it takes to blink an eye, a simple five minute task done unsafely can turn into a painful disaster with effects that will last a lifetime.

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